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ABSTRACT

This paper provides guidelines and examples for developing a college outdoor education program. From a literature review, an examination of existing college outdoor programs, and the author's personal experiences with outdoor programming at the California State University (Chico), the following 15 steps in developing a program were derived: (1) developing a statement of philosophy, goals, and objectives; (2) considering methods of outdoor programming and administration, including clubs, common adventure programs, educational programs, and guided programs; (3) establishing funding based on scientific and economic rationale; (4) developing a ranking of student outdoor recreation needs and user patterns; (5) developing a risk management strategy; (6) obtaining a site; (7) obtaining equipment; (8) establishing a transportation policy; (9) developing a program of outdoor adventure pursuits; (10) developing a marketing and publicity strategy; (11) developing a staff; (12) planning instruction for outdoor leaders; (13) developing files of accumulated program knowledge; (14) developing manuals for program policies and procedures; and (15) reassessing program needs and student needs. Contains 30 references. (LP)

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Developing a College Outing Program

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Abstract—The field of college outdoor programming is relatively young, and the development of standards and procedures has been done with little documentation. In particular, more systematic information is needed in the area of establishing and developing programs. This paper describes 15 sequential steps or guidelines which should be useful for the inception of new programs and development of existing ones. It is based on an extensive literature review, a survey of California programs and personal visitations and interviews.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a list of guidelines and examples for establishing or developing a college outing program. Before discussing these guidelines, a brief background and a literature review on the college outdoor programming field is helpful. Individuals in the field belong to one of more organizations. One is the Association of College Unions International (ACUI). ACUI is one of the main networking organizations, since the majority of college outing programs are administered by student unions. The National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA), the American Association of Physical Education Health and Recreation (AAPEHR), and the Association of Environmental Educators (AEE) are also common sponsoring organizations. The problem is that there is no one organization specifically oriented toward college outing programs, nor do ACUI, NIRSA, AAPEHR, and AEE network information concerning college outing programs.

Realizing a need for a college outdoor program association, outing program administrators organized the first Conference on Outdoor Recreation in 1984. Although conferences were held in 1986 and 1988 and attracted more and more interest and participation, no organization of college outing programs has yet been established.

Little has been published on college outing programs. With no formal organization, literature has been scattered and unorganized. Proceedings of the three conferences have been

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invaluable in the preparation of this project, but do not provide a systematic approach to establishing a college outing program—most of the information is applicable to existing programs and their concerns.

Leadership and Administration of Outdoor Pursuits (Ford and Blanchard, 1985) is the single most important resource for a potential outing program, containing information on outdoor skills as well as program administration. It is comprehensive, but does not address any of the examples specific to college programs. *Common Practices in Adventure Programming*, published by AEE (Johanson, 1987), is an excellent source of programmatic guidelines and trip procedures, but it does not include organizational and administrative information necessary to establish a college outing program. Ron Watters' *Outdoor Programming Handbook* is the only known publication of its kind, similar in purpose to this project, but his emphasis is on the common adventure method established at his campus, Idaho State. Grimm (1973), Mason (1974), Leonoudakis(1985), Rennie (1985), and Simmons (1976) also have published papers describing common adventure programming. Other programming handbooks utilizing club, class credit, or guided method are not currently available. Therefore, a study of other methods, and in this case, the guided method, is in order. Most college outing programs have been developed in the last twenty years. Now that they have become established, there is a call from the field to organize and professionalize. Specific areas of concern include leadership training, risk management, funding and selling to administrators, and promotion of programs. These and other concerns will be addressed in the remaining pages of this paper.

The following 15 steps to establishing a college outing program have been derived from a literature review, visits and communication with other college programs, and personal experience with Adventure Outings at California State University, Chico.

Establishing a college outing program should be approached in the following order:

Step 1. A statement of philosophy, goals, and objectives.

Objectives should reflect a philosophy of participation (Shirer, 1985).

Simmons (1976) lists objectives for a common adventure program:

- to be initiated, directed, and operated by participating individuals to provide opportunities for new experiences
- to provide a variety of opportunities in the outdoors
- to seek and identify human and material resources which will broaden the scope and variety of outdoor experiences
- to provide participant enjoyment
- to remain safe
- to develop new interpersonal relationships
- to be low cost
- to develop various wilderness related skills
- to help participants become self reliant

Simmons (1988) experienced distrust and neglect from university administration and competition for space, recognition, facilities, equipment, and participants with other departments on campus. He advises linking the outdoor program objectives to those of the college, an important strategy when applying for funding. An objectives statement that is familiar to college administrators will more likely be approved.

Watters (1986, p. 27) cites legal reasons for stated program goals. Most importantly, benefits to society should be clearly articulated to outweigh the risk to the individual in the eyes of the court. A program that has contemplated and constructed these ideals is considered in the eyes of the law to be more professional and less negligent.

Step 2. Consider methods of participation.

Four distinct methods of outdoor programming and administration have developed: a) club, b) common adventure, c) educational, and d) guided.

The club method is the outdoor recreation organization that has a campus charter, an internal hierarchy and decision making, dues collection, equipment stewardship, and membership requirements. Club method is the least expensive system of organization in terms of administrative time and money commitments, relying instead upon the energy and enthusiasm of members. Clubs have the problem of being viewed as exclusive, and also fluctuate from year to year under the direction of student leaders.

The common adventure method is an outdoor recreation structure where no one is paid for leadership, costs are shared, and all participants share responsibility for the success of a trip. Administration may be provided by paid staff.

Leonoudakis (1985) lists examples of leadership action in the common adventure method:

- Setting a goal
- Identifying needs
- Devising a plan
- Identifying a problem
- Presenting options or alternatives
- Defining how decisions will be made
- Asking other people's opinions
- Requesting advice
- Calling for a vote
- Establishing consensus
- Keeping discussions focused/on track
- Collecting and organizing information for discussion
- Delegating responsibility
- Making a decision
- Promoting an issue or concern
- Initiating the introduction of people to each other
- Negotiating changes in plans
- Arbitrating a debate or difference of opinion

Some of the problems inherent to common adventure become apparent from this list, which Leonoudakis also identifies:

- Confusion when everybody's idea about what cooperation means turns out to be different
- Disappointment when the trip turns out to be less challenging than expected; anxiety when the trip turns out more challenging than expected
- Resistance when the trip turns out to require more work than expected

- Withdrawal or resistance when decisions are being made in away people are not prepared for
- Frustration when most of the responsibility for the trip seems to fall into the unwilling trip initiator's lap
- Impatience when the group can't seem to make a decision without hours of haggling
- Frustration when the group seems to take forever to get anything done
- Conflict when an individual attempts to dominate or manipulate an unwilling group
- Conflict arising out of irreconcilable differences of opinion
- Resentment when people insist on telling other people how to do their job
- Personality conflicts
- All kinds of problems when individuals or factions develop different or conflicting goals in the middle of the trip
- Alienation when a group remains isolated from each other throughout the trip
- Disenchantment with the cooperative adventure process when interpersonal bummers ruin an otherwise fine trip

Rennie (1985b) also lists from his experience some of the problems with common adventure:

- Assuring that a minimum level of activity will take place
- Lack of understanding of the system or a lack of confidence their ability to initiate a trip under such a system
- Lack of personal transportation or other resources to make the trip happen
- Fear of getting a "turkey" or other non-conforming person on a trip and having to take responsibility for that person
- Concern over personal liability
- No need to initiate trips through the program by individuals who have their own friends, skills, and equipment.

Advantages of the common adventure method include:

- Minimum of administrative time involved
- Development of cooperative skills and democratic process among participants
- Development of self-reliance among participants
- Minimum of liability to sponsoring agency (the general consensus, although there is some debate that common adventure might be more liable because of less structure and control)
- Unlimited amount of outings possible

The educational method involves outdoor recreation and leadership classes offered for credit through the college, usually by the recreation or physical education departments, or sometimes through extension courses. Establishing an educational method outing program requires friendly ears and funding from within the physical education or recreation department, a difficult task for an outsider.

The guided method is the outdoor recreation structure most resembling private entrepreneurism—the agency provides services and charges a fee to participants. Establishing a guided method outing program requires making a proposal to a sponsoring organization, usually the student union.

Educational method and guided method programs have the following advantages:

- trained leadership
- safety
- professionalism
- efficiency of time involvement for the participant.

Webb (1989) suggests that the method of participation should reflect: (a) local demographics, (b) financial source and size, (c) geography of the surrounding area, (d) traditions of the past, (e) political and organizational structure of the college, and (f) interests of the outdoor program administration. If there is currently no existing method established, Webb states that the most important consideration is funding source and size. Watters(1984) implies that legal liability is the most important single consideration. The current trend is toward guided method programs.

Step 3. Establish funding.

Administrators need scientific and economic rationale for establishing a college outing program on a campus where no program exists. A potential outings coordinator must be able to articulate a barrage of facts to support the need for a college outing program. Practice the phrase, "Studies have shown . . . " and be able to quote studies of benefits to the individual, the university, and society.

Several previous studies of benefits of outing programs have involved outdoor pursuits, thus limiting their application to outdoor programs in general. However, a well-designed program of offerings should include outdoor pursuits, only to be able to cite the impressive benefits in funding proposals.

Debate over funding sources surfaced in sessions of the 1988 Conference on Outdoor Recreation. Local businesses have recently begun to complain and, in some cases, file suits against college student unions because of unfair business practices. Their claim is that pays-its-own-way programs have unfair advantage because of its location on campus and the implied endorsement of the university. Subsidized programs, then, would seem to have an even greater advantage, but in most cases programs are aware of this and make effort not to engage in competition with the private sector, either by limiting advertising or by providing non-competing, cooperative services. Whatever the funding, a survey of local outdoor business should be conducted by any developing college program.

Step 4. Develop a ranking of student outdoor recreation needs and use patterns.

Surveys of existing programs by Blundell (1982) and Webb (1990) of Brigham Young University are helpful for an overview of what is going on around the country in college outing programs. In the pre establishment phase of development, assessment should come from: (a) literature review, (b) information form other colleges, and (c) on-campus surveys. After the outing program is established, ongoing assessment should include: (a) the three methods used in the pre-establishment phase, (b) evaluations from outing participants and leaders, and (c) observation by the outing program administration.

Step 5. Develop a risk management strategy.

Within the current sue-happy legal climate, the major concern for most outings today is liability. Risk management involves establishing insurance, limiting liability (as with a waiver form), trip leader training and certification, and outing rules, procedures, and emergency strategies. Watters (1984) gives examples of waiver forms for both guided and common adventure programs, and warns that the inclusion of the word "safe" in objectives and waiver forms might increase liability. Varying types of waivers are used by programs. The Idaho State waiver is one of the most thorough, including a listing of all perceivable accidents. Lawyer Tim Boone has represented outing programs, adding some clarity to the tort liability issue, and has updated waiver forms for the benefit of outing programs.

Step 6. Obtain a site.

An office is essential for program identity and a base of operation for administrative planning and records. The student union may be an ideal location because of its high use and visibility, but beginning (or even established) programs often find themselves in space politics, stuck in a basement or some other undesirable location. Maximum exposure and maximum size are two variables that might conflict. The real program location, however, is the outdoors, and sometimes you must "go with what you've got" and not dwell upon inadequate indoor space. Successful programs and increased participation rates may eventually persuade administrators of the economics of a more suitable space.

At the bare minimum, a site includes desk space for trip planning and record keeping, and a telephone. When the program begins accumulating equipment, space will be needed for storage.

Many programs incorporate a resource center for outdoor information within their office site. Included in this resource center can be trip information files, handouts and brochures, equipment catalogs, outdoor periodicals and books, maps, bulletin boards, video tapes and players, slide viewers, and tables and couches for comfortable lounging, pianning, and recollecting.

Step 7. Obtain equipment.

Watters (1984) suggests a minimum equipment list for a new program. Equipment needs, however, will be dependent upon the initial budget, space for storage, and local out-door recreation opportunities and priorities. Outdoor equipment trade shows (for example the Outdoor Retailer August show in Reno) provide a ready access to manufacturers who are anxious to give special deals to college programs because of the exposure of their product to a wide market.

Skrastins (1989) demonstrates successful business practices in managing a rental center and equipment for outings. Webb (1989) has developed a sophisticated inventory system for rental and retail management.

Most professionals agree that quality equipment is preferred because of reliability, durability, less down time, and reduced liability. Cheaper brands, however, often foreign made copies of name brands, deserve some consideration. There isn't much need to take a $200 4-season tent backyard camping when you can purchase five tents of sufficient quality at $40 each and build up inventory at a faster rate. Repairs will be needed more frequently, but remember that your labor costs (work/study or volunteer) will be much lower than manufacturers' labor costs.

Step 8. Establish a transportation policy.

Watters (1984) discusses the liability problems of different transportation means and suggests a separate waiver form for drivers. Most participants and leaders prefer transportation provided for the group in a single vehicle such as a van or bus, for economy, simplicity, and group unity. Many programs, however, cannot afford vehicles and transfer the hidden costs of transportation (insurance and upkeep) to the drivers of carpools. Some method should be devised to reimburse drivers for these hidden costs to reduce participants' reluctance to use their vehicles.

Common Practices in Adventure Programming (Johanson, 1987) recommends that each program should:

- maintain written evidence that all motor vehicles and trailers are regularly inspected, serviced and maintained to insure safe operating condition
- equip vehicles used to transport staff or participants with a stocked first aid kit, driver information sheet, and emergency accessories such as chains, tools, fire extinguisher, and flares and/or reflectors
- maintain written driver qualification and training standards for those staff who will drive program vehicles used to transport participants and/or pull trailers
- have written safety procedures such as safety education, pre-trip vehicle check, loading and unloading, seating, and highway stops (planned and unplanned)
- not allow passengers to ride on the top of a load
- not transport participants in open bed trucks
- schedule driving shifts which do not exceed four hours
- use seat belts

Step 9. Develop a program of outings.

Program offerings should be based upon information compiled from: (a) student surveys, (b) other colleges' offerings, (c) a survey of past weather patterns of the area (refer to Climatological Data, by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), (d) area maps, (e) offerings of other outing programs (such as Sierra Club) in the area, (f) equipment available, (g) leadership available, (h) transportation available, and (i) legal and liability constraints. The outings should be listed in advance in some sort of brochure or calendar.

Ewert (1989, p. 134) identifies emerging trends in outdoor adventure pursuits:

- greater emphasis on minimum impact camping and travel techniques
- increased use of outdoor adventure outfitters
- increased use of highly structured programming
- changes in clientele with respect to demographics (older), expectations (more demanding), and motivations (image, excitement)
- greater reliance on technological improvements in equipment
- diminished use and knowledge of traditional outdoor skills
- more sophisticated delivery of material
- more specialization of expertise, i.e., instruction for business clients, youth, special groups, etc.

Current trends in programming include freshman orientation wilderness programs (O'Keefe, 1989) (Stremba, 1989), minorities inclusion (Neubert and McPhee, 1989), special populations

programming (Shirer, 1989), and women's outings (Miranda and Yerkesin Meir, 1987). A developing program, however, needs to concentrate on basic offerings such as canoeing and camping before becoming trendy.

When planning for student groups, try to incorporate outings that require a day or less; surveys indicate that most students have less than one day of recreation time allotted on weekends. Avoid self-reference criteria (planning trips that are challenging to you or the staff)—outings must be aimed at the skill level and interest of the students. Another important concern is the issue of perceived crowding. In general, people visit recreation areas as members of social groups and wilderness areas to escape social groups.

Step 10. Develop a marketing and publicity strategy.

Bursk and Morton (Britt and Guess, 1985) define marketing as all the functions in the process of causing goods or services to move from conception to the ultimate consumer. Included are marketing research, design of the service, distribution, personal selling, advertising or other promotion, pricing, and planning of overall market strategy. The challenge is that ours has become a marketing economy, not a production economy—implying, in the case of outdoor programming, that no matter how good proposed trips seem, there really is no product until it is successfully marketed.

Kotler and Fox (1985, p.7) state that marketing specifically for educational institutions is "designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with targeted markets to achieve institutional objectives. Marketing involves designing the institutions's offerings to meet the target market's needs and desires, and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets."

When considering marketing, the program must determine priorities. Is the program to be subsidized or self supporting? Is the program aimed mostly for students or are community members to be courted?

For publicity, campus and local newspapers, radio, and television often provide public service announcements at no cost to non-profit organizations. Flyers, calendars, and mailing lists are other common publicity methods. The campus needs assessment survey should be constructed to be a useful marketing and publicity tool.

11. Develop a staff.

Staffing can be by (a) volunteers, (b) interns, (c) apprenticeships, and (d) paid positions. Volunteers are the least expensive, but require training and sometimes are not committed or reliable. Interns require cooperation and sponsorship with a department of the university and need supervision, but can be worth the time commitment. Apprentices work their way up through the system and are a valuable part of any program. Paid staff should provide the most reliability.

Some programs, such as the Escape Route at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo operate entirely with a volunteer staff. Volunteers can earn class and internship credit, as well as working their way up through the system to positions of prestige. Policies for volunteer benefits such as use of equipment, free or discount outings, and pro deals on equipment should be established. In some programs, volunteers work their way up through the program to paid positions. Investigate federal and state work/study allocations—these programs cover 70-50% of students' wages.

12. Develop plans of instruction for outdoor leaders.

Qualified student leaders may be hard to find in the planning stages of the program. Initial outings may have to be limited to: (a) the expertise of the administrative staff, (b) contractors, and (c) community members. Once the program is in operation, trained or trainable student leaders will hopefully emerge.

One advantage of the educational method is the length of duration and motivation of students to complete course requirements. Nielson (1989) has developed a comprehensive 13-page checklist of competencies in conjunction with the staff training program classes through the Department of Recreational Sports at Colgate University.

At CSU, Chico student leaders are developed through are creation department class offering Wilderness Education Association certification. The W.E.A. teaching model is based on four common elements of every program: (a) that every leader is different; (b) that every individual and group is different; (c) that every program situation is different; and (d) that every program and participant must be evaluated. Cain (1985) lists the Wilderness Education Association's 18-point curriculum:

- Judgement/Decision-Making
- Leadership
- Expedition Behavior
- Environmental Ethics
- Basic Camping Skills
- Group Process & Communication Skills
- Expedition Planning
- Specialized Travel/Adventure Activity
- First Aid, Emergency Procedures, Survival
- Health & Sanitation
- Rations
- Equipment
- Clothing
- Travel Techniques
- Navigation
- Weather
- Natural & Cultural History
- Evaluation

Certification is a currently debated topic and not likely to be mandated as an industry in the near future. A survey of California college outing programs revealed that, while almost all programs require some kind of certification such as CPR and First Aid and conduct their own in-house training, only three of 13 required a leadership training course. Pros and cons of leader certification have been discussed, but one thing is certain—a currently certified leader will require less training than an uncertified "wannabe."

Step 13. Develop files of accumulated program knowledge.

A college outing program will always be in a state of transition as leaders and participants graduate and move on. Program files, then, are essential to the smooth transition of leadership.

Files may also include participant evaluations, maps, general information on specific activities or geographical areas, and ideas for potential outings.

Step 14. Develop manuals for program policies and procedures.

Assuming that the program is now functional, every-thing should be put in writing for the benefit of staff and volunteers. Improta (1985) states that for programs charging a fee (guided and instructional methods), activity procedures and techniques should be written and up to date. As with trip files, staff handbooks are important in any business with a high turnover rate. As there can be an unlimited amount of information to include in a staff handbook, it is important to keep it as brief as possible, so that it is read. Adventure Outings uses a general information handbook, with addenda for specific activities.

Common Practices in Adventure Programming (Johanson, 1987) can be used (or even copied) for many activity and administrative guidelines. "Notes on the 3rd Edition" (p. v) proudly states that portions of the document have been made part of agency contracts, included in staff training manuals in both the public and private sector, and frequently used as the basis of peer reviews.

Braun (1988) points out that the relationship of standardized instruction and tort liability is that the establishment of a standard of care and adherence to a standardized instructional system provide documentary evidence to the highest standard of professional care. Written instruction and staff manuals, then, not only show the program's maturity, but commitment to the highest industry (and legal) standards.

15. Reassess and grow.

Any business—especially one with the dynamic and vibrant clientele of college students--must keep in step with current trends. Just when you think everything is running smoothly and you want to sit back and watch your pension grow, it's time to reassess student needs, program needs and opportunities, and your own personal weaknesses. Outings coordinators ranked opportunities for personal improvement (Neubert and McPhee, 1989):

1. Fiscal management/business
2. Outdoor technical skills
3. Marketing and promotion
4. Communication--written
5. Liability
6. Communication--oral
7. First aid/E.M.T./ backcountry medicine
8. Ropes course knowledge
9. Analysis of group dynamics
10. Interpersonal skills
11. Delegation skills
12. Risk management
13. Time management
14. Leadership training
15. Fund raising

Outings coordinators have to be multi-talented, bureaucratic, scientific, and business-like

to appeal to various administrators, yet skilled, understanding, communicative, and even mystical enough to appeal to student leaders and participants. In the constantly changing arena of a college community, outings coordinators must be dynamic and adaptive. The inside joke about students is, "They're getting younger every year."

Roland McNutt is the Coordinator of Adventure Outings at California State University-Chico. He has a MS in Recreation Administration from Chico and was previously employed as a teacher, camp director and raft guide.

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